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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 002701

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

TRANSPORTATION FOR KEVIN SAMPLE
BRUSSELS FOR JAMES BURRELL
ATHENS FOR FAA
ROME FOR INS
COMMERCE ALSO FOR ADVOCACY CENTER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [FAIR](#) [ASEC](#) [ECON](#) [BEXP](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: KEEPING THE DIALOGUE GOING: AMBASSADOR,
AVIATION MINISTER REVIEW SECURITY POSTURE AT LAGOS AIRPORT,
OTHER AVIATION ISSUES

Sensitive but Unclassified -- Protect Accordingly

1. (SBU) Introduction and Summary: Ambassador discussed with Aviation Minister Kema Chikwe security procedures at Murtala Muhammad International Airport (MMIA), the requirements that needed to be met before U.S. INS assistance can be reinstated at MMIA, the distribution to Nigerian air carriers of the FBI watch list, an effort by World Airways to extend wet-lease service to Nigeria, and the difficulties Lockheed Martin allegedly has confronted in submitting a bid to the Ministry for radar equipment.

2. (SBU) Minister Chikwe deeply regretted the recent incident when an INS official was assaulted at MMIA and pledged to provide more security personnel at South African Airways (SAA) check-in and boarding areas. She also promised to establish a Magistrate Court at the airport to prosecute passengers who present fraudulent documents. Although no Nigerian carriers currently offer direct air service to the U.S., an unclassified version of the FBI watch list was provided to the Minister.

3. (SBU) The Minister refused to confirm whether the Ministry had approved a request by World Airways to offer U.S. to Lagos service; instead, she echoed a familiar refrain about how the foreign operators posed an unfair challenge to her effort to revive (moribund) Nigerian Airways. The Minister stated Lockheed Martin had not submitted a tender bid on an air navigation system but had instead sent a Memorandum of Agreement that the Ministry found unacceptable. She said Lockheed Martin did not appear "serious" about bidding on the project, but the Ministry would in any case extend the bid deadline to November 15 to try to accommodate them. End Summary.

INS Assistance to SAA: How to Get It Back

4. (SBU) On October 9, Ambassador Jeter, accompanied by Econoff, conveyed to Minister Chikwe the results of his recent discussions with the INS Commissioner and other INS Officials in Washington. The Ambassador explained that the September 7 incident at MMIA (when an INS official had been physically assaulted during screening procedures) demonstrated the need for more active airport security in the screening process. INS would not be able to assist Nigerian Immigration Service or SAA security personnel, the Ambassador emphasized, without Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) guarantees of the safety of INS personnel and a signed bilateral MOU. INS and the Department of State, the Ambassador noted, were working on the terms of a proposed MOU which would provide the parameters of INS assistance at MMIA. But he reiterated the INS officers would limit their assistance to screening documents. If INS officials were to return to MMIA, they would only serve in an advisory capacity and not have the power to retain suspected malafide documents, either U.S. or Nigerian.

5. (SBU) Minister Chikwe was visibly upset about the September 7 incident. She admitted that she was personally unhappy with FAAN security since they were not standing by to intervene when passengers threatened immigration officials, airline staff, or other passengers. She also agreed FAAN security officers should be responsible for retaining suspected fraudulent documents, handed to them by immigration officers. The Minister announced she planned to inaugurate

this month a Magistrate's Court at MMIA to prosecute cases of document fraud, "touting", and other crimes.

16. (SBU) Shortly thereafter, Minister Chikwe called in FAAN's Managing Director to demand he supply additional security officers at the SAA check-in and boarding areas. She invited the FAAN Aviation Security Officer and Director of Airport Operations to discuss altering the physical terminal layout of the immediate SAA check-in area to separate passengers from non-passengers. Although the FAAN officers noted they were understaffed, they agreed to provide additional officers at both SAA check-in and boarding. The officials suggested adding desks at the boarding gate to conduct document screening immediately before passenger departure. The Minister then appealed to the Ambassador to bring INS back to MMIA.

FAA Airport Security Inspection

17. (SBU) The Ambassador reviewed with Minister Chikwe the results of a recent FAA assessment on how SAA and FAAN were complying with new ICAO/FAA security directives. On September 28, visiting FAA Aviation Specialist James Burrell determined that SAA and FAAN were generally in compliance with the FAA security directives. However, Burrell was concerned that the physical layout of the screening area hindered airport staff from inspecting passengers and their baggage continually as the FAA directives require. He recommended that FAAN provide additional tables to perform baggage inspection. Burrell had also noted that Pathfinder, SAA's security contractor, did not adequately pre-inspect the airplane cabin before allowing passengers to board. Minister Chikwe concurred positively to all these points. She agreed to discuss how to redesign the check-in area to facilitate check-in and baggage screening.

The FBI Watch-list

18. (SBU) The Ambassador inquired whether airlines operating from Nigeria had access to the latest FBI Watch-List. The Minister responded that she was uncertain whether all airlines had the Watch-List. She herself did not have a copy but assumed that the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) would have it. (Comment: They do. Post later delivered a non-sensitive copy of the list to the Minister. End Comment.) Ambassador pointed out that the FAA had distributed the list to the headquarters of airlines with direct flights to the U.S., including to SAA Headquarters in Johannesburg. SAA is currently the only carrier flying direct between Nigeria and the U.S.

Status of SAA-NA Flight Agreement and World Airways

19. (SBU) Ambassador Jeter inquired whether government-owned Nigerian Airways (NA) would likely extend its partnership with South African Airways on service to JFK. The Minister commented that Nigerian Airways (read: the Minister) is not happy with the partnership. Many here, she noted, blame South African Airways for allegedly refusing to treat a Nigerian man who died on board the flight. This incident, the Minister said, may influence the Ministry to review very carefully an agreement to extend the Nigerian Airways/South African Airways partnership for another two years.

10. (SBU) Jeter informed the Minister that U.S. Department of Transportation had just granted approval to World Airways to wet-lease airplanes to an unnamed African carrier for service between Lagos and either New York, Baltimore, or Atlanta. While not saying whether the GON had approved the route, the Minister instead returned to an old refrain about how competing service further challenges the "revitalization" of Nigerian Airways. She further criticized the International Finance Corporation (IFC) because it did not want the GON to invest in the carrier. Instead, she inferred, the IFC wanted the Ministry to run Nigerian Airways into the ground so foreign carriers could benefit from the privatization of the airline. She admitted that "a culture of mismanagement and corruption" had destroyed NA, but she argued the airline only needed "technical assistance and good management." She concluded by saying that the reason the National Assembly chose to phase in Open Skies until 2006 was to provide Nigerian Airways breathing space from competition from foreign carriers.

Lockheed Martin Bid for Radar Equipment

11. (SBU) Ambassador Jeter informed the Minister that he had received an inquiry from Lockheed Martin regarding a bid they made on radar contracts with the Ministry. According to the company, the Ministry had "ignored" Lockheed's bid although the company had beaten an "impossible" (September 16) deadline to submit their proposal. Furthermore, Lockheed Martin believed the Ministry had requested bids for a regional air navigation system, but the Ministry later informed them that it only wanted radar equipment and installation services. Lockheed claimed it had also submitted a Memorandum of Agreement to finance the cost of the equipment and services.

12. (SBU) The Minister claimed she had not received a bid from Lockheed Martin. Moreover, the proposed Memorandum of Agreement was unacceptable because the GON was unwilling to guarantee a loan to purchase the equipment. The Ministry, she said, had extended the bid deadline to October 15, but still had not received a bid from Lockheed Martin who, she asserted, was "not serious". Chikwe claimed the company wanted to come to Nigeria to survey the airport so that they could determine the best air navigation system for Nigeria. The Ministry was determined to purchase a system capable of being integrated with navigation systems elsewhere in West Africa which would allow Nigeria to become a hub for regional air traffic. She indicated several bids had been received by the Ministry, including from Marconi and British Aerospace. However, the Ministry now planned to extend the deadline to November 15 and Lockheed Martin still had an opportunity to submit a bid on the air navigation system.

Comment: Keeping the Momentum on Security Enhancement at MMIA

13. (SBU) The Minister appeared to be very determined to resolve the outstanding security issues at MMIA and provide the proper environment for INS's return. But this is not the first time the subject of MMIA security has been discussed with the Minister and we will continue to monitor events closely at the airport for signs of improvement. A suggestion by the Ambassador for senior USG, GON, and South African High Commission officials to observe activities at the SAA counter and boarding gate was very well received. We do note that despite the security problems cited above, the GON has made tremendous strides in improving the overall security and safety posture at MMIA over the last two years.

14. (SBU) Chikwe's criticism of SAA should be placed in context. Neither SAA nor the GON has treated the relationship like a newly wedded couple. However, both airlines appear to be making money and continued direct service to the U.S. is a top priority for the GON. The first anniversary of the SAA/NA service is in February and posturing by the GON to obtain concessions from SAA may be behind Chikwe's statements. Meanwhile, privatization of Nigerian Airways keeps moving backwards. The new date to privatize Nigerian Airways is set for December 2002. However, even before the events of September 11, the future of Nigerian Airways was at best tenuous. We are doubtful if Nigerian Airways will meet the new deadline. The International Finance Corporation, which earlier this year relinquished its advisory role on Nigerian Airways privatization, opposed the delays, interference, and other hurdles put in the way of Nigerian Airways privatization process.

Jeter